

We Claim:

1. An irreversible display comprising:
a metal film;
a display window aligned with the metal film;
an indicium aligned with the display window and obscured by the metal film; and
said window providing access to said metal film for exposing the metal film to a chemical agent that clears a portion of the metal film and reveals the indicium.
2. The display of claim 1 in which the metal film has a thickness no more than 1000 Angstroms.
3. The display of claim 1 in which the metal film is made primarily of aluminum.
4. The display of claim 1 in which the metal film is made primarily of zinc.
5. The display of claim 1 further comprising a substrate supporting the metal film.
6. The display of claim 5 in which the metal film is vapor deposited onto the substrate.
7. The display of claim 6 in which the substrate is transparent.
8. The display of claim 1 further comprising top and bottom substrates between which the metal film is mounted.
9. The display of claim 8 in which the display window is formed as an opening in the top substrate.

10. The display of claim 9 in which the indicium is supported adjacent to the bottom substrate and is separated from the top substrate by the metal film.

11. The display of claim 1 in which the indicium is a patch of color that contrasts with a color of the metal film.

12. The display of claim 1 in which the indicium includes information.

13. The display of claim 1 in which the indicium is formed by at least one layer of ink.

14. An irreversible display comprising:
a metal film supported between two substrates;
a display window formed in one of the substrates and aligned with the metal film;
an indicium aligned with the display window and obscured by the metal film; and
an opening in one of the substrates providing access to said metal film for exposing the metal film to a chemical agent that clears a portion of the metal film and reveals the indicium.

15. The display of claim 14 further comprising a transport layer between the two substrates for transporting the clearing agent from the opening to the metal film.

16. The display of claim 15 in which the transport layer is a wick.

17. The display of claim 14 in which the opening is formed in the display window.

18. The display of claim 14 in which the metal film has a thickness no more than 1000 Angstroms.

19. The display of claim 14 in which the substrates are top and bottom substrates and the indicium is supported adjacent to the bottom substrate and is separated from the top substrate by the metal film.

20. An irreversible display comprising:
an opaque metal film supported by a substrate;
a protective layer laid out in a pattern on the metal film;
a first portion of the metal film that is not covered by the protective layer being accessible to a clearing agent that changes the first portion of the metal film from opaque to clear upon contact;
a second portion of the metal film that is covered by the protective layer being at least temporarily inaccessible to the clearing agent; and
the first and second portions of the metal film being arranged for producing a viewable pattern upon exposure of the first portion of the metal film to the clearing agent.

21. The display of claim 20 in which the opaque metal film has a thickness no greater than 1000 Angstroms.

22. The display of claim 20 in which the opaque metal film is primarily aluminum.

23. The display of claim 20 in which the opaque metal film is primarily zinc.

24. The display of claim 20 in which the substrate is one of a top substrate and a bottom substrate between which the metal film is mounted.

25. The display of claim 24 in which a display window is formed in the top substrate.

26. The display of claim 25 in which the display window is formed by an opening through which the clearing agent can be applied to the first portion of the metal film.

27. The display of claim 24 in which the clearing agent is temporarily confined within a reservoir formed between the top and bottom substrates.

28. The display of claim 20 in which the clearing agent is transparent and overlies the metal film.

29. The display of claim 28 in which a spacer separates the clearing agent from the metal film through an opening aligned with at least a portion of the protective layer.

30. The display of claim 20 in which the protective layer is substantially invisible.

31. The display of claim 30 further comprising a display window for observing metal film.

32. The display of claim 31 in which the protective layer is located between the display window and the metal film.

33. The display of claim 32 in which the protective layer is transparent.